

# WHY COUNTIES MATTER!



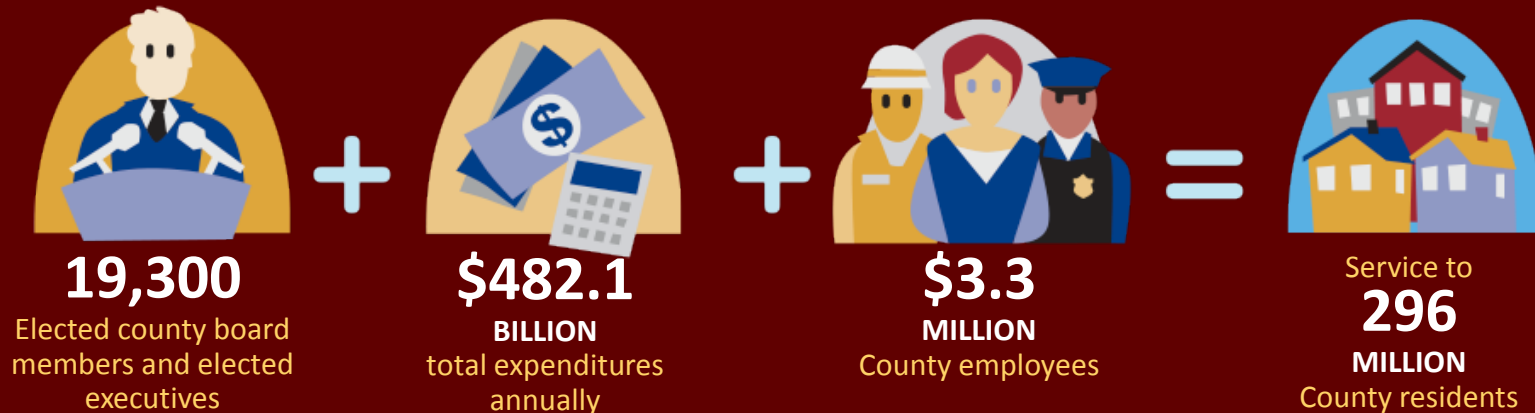
**NACO**

*National Association of Counties*



# THE DIVERSITY OF COUNTIES

No two counties are exactly the same. Counties are one of America's oldest forms of government, dating back to 1634 when the first county governments were established in Virginia. Ever since, county governments continue to evolve and adapt to changing environments and populations, with Petersburg Borough, Alaska, incorporating as recently as 2013. Counties are diverse in the way they are structured and how they deliver services to their communities. States decide counties' roles and responsibilities. States can allow counties to govern themselves by granting them home rule authority, which gives counties varying degrees of power to decide their own structural, functional and fiscal organization. Counties' demographic, geographic and economic characteristics dictate how they deliver services to their communities. The organization and structure of counties are tailored to fit their communities' needs and characteristics.



- Los Angeles County invests \$18.9 billion annually — or more than 23 of our state governments each year.
- If Cook County, Ill., were a state, it would be bigger than 30 states in population.
- Almost two-thirds of counties have less than 50,000 residents.
- One in four acres of county land is federally owned. In the West, one in two acres of county land is federally owned.

## TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

Transportation and infrastructure are critical components that support the economies of our counties and improve the standard of living for all Americans. By providing efficient transportation and transit options such as buses, trains, light rail and subway systems, counties are the driving force connecting communities. Counties invest in building the schools where students learn, the hospitals that treat and provide care to the community and the jails that house and rehabilitate wrongdoers. From cleaning up storm debris and restoring safety to the community to cleaning the water we drink by maintaining reservoirs, purification plants and pumping stations, counties provide the basic services that are often taken for granted.

### Services include:

- Transit
- Roads
- Bridges
- Airports
- Construction of public facilities
- Water and sewage systems
- Solid waste management
- Utilities like gas and electricity

COUNTIES ARE  
INVOLVED IN  
THE OPERATION  
OF **30%**  
of public airports

COUNTIES INVEST  
**\$52.2**  
BILLION

In construction of public  
facilities annually

COUNTIES OWN  
**228,238**  
bridges

COUNTIES INVEST  
**\$106.3** BILLION

IN BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE AND  
MAINTAINING AND OPERATING PUBLIC WORKS  
ANNUALLY

COUNTIES OWN  
AND MAINTAIN

**45%**

of America's roads

COUNTIES ARE INVOLVED

IN **27%**

of public transit systems

COUNTIES INVEST

**\$18.6** BILLION

In sewage and solid  
waste management  
annually

## HEALTHCARE

Counties create support systems to keep you healthy from the time you are born until the time you grow old. Many counties operate hospitals and health facilities that provide clinical services, cancer and cardiac care, and emergency and trauma care. County nursing homes offer restorative care and rehabilitation, and promote quality of life and wellness to the elderly. From preventative measures like administering flu shots to educating the public with health information, county health departments ensure the everyday health of their residents.

### Services Include:

- Hospitals
- Nursing homes
- Behavioral and mental healthcare
- Immunizations
- Testing services
- Indigent healthcare
- Health code inspections
- Health clinics
- Public health

### COUNTIES SUPPORT

**960** HOSPITALS WITH A  
TOTAL OF **96,228** BEDS  
THAT SERVE MORE THAN  
**14 MILLION** PATIENT  
DAYS

### COUNTIES ARE INVOLVED

In promoting public  
health through more  
than **1,550** local  
health departments

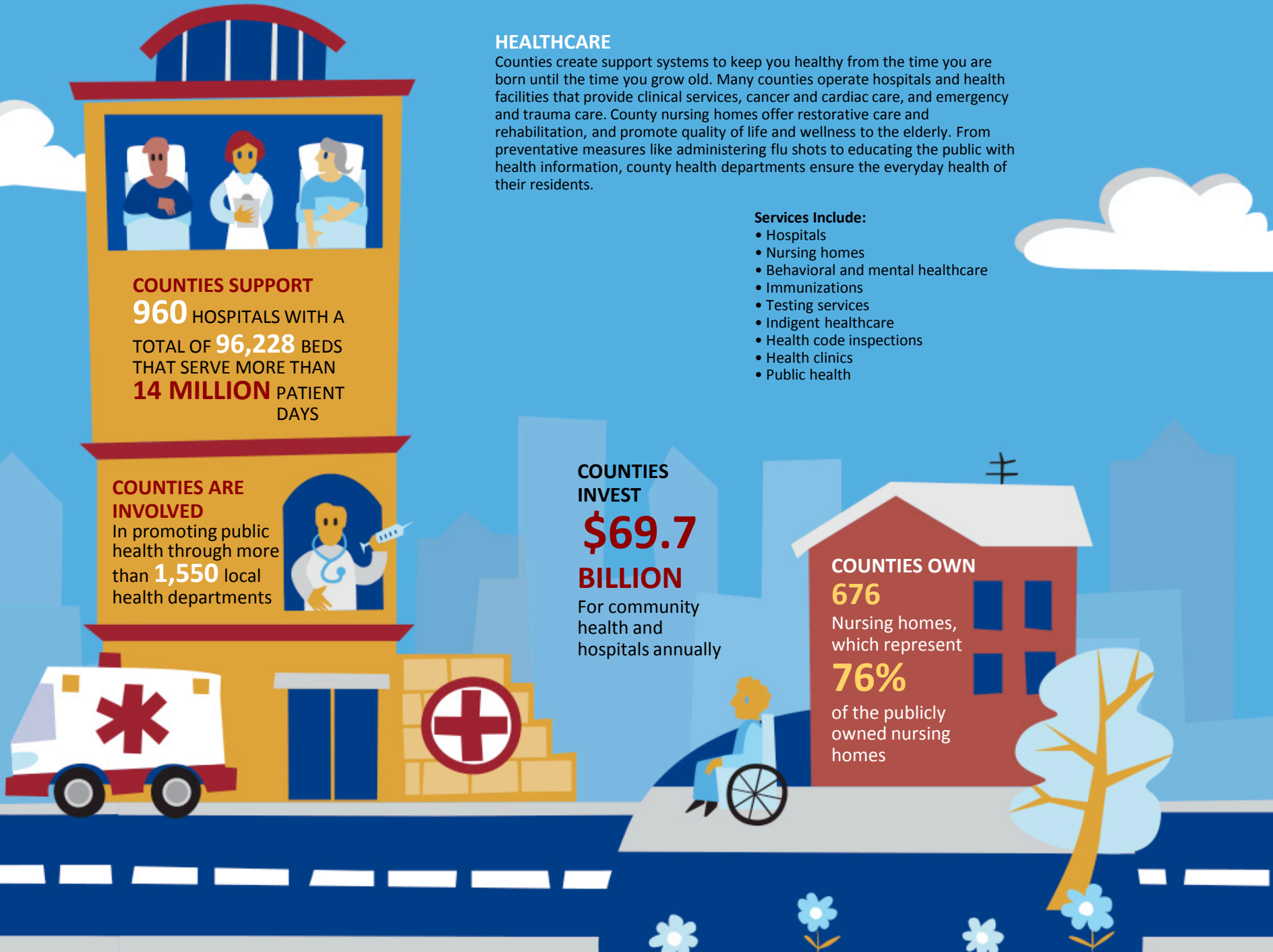
### COUNTIES INVEST

**\$69.7  
BILLION**

For community  
health and  
hospitals annually

### COUNTIES OWN

**676**  
Nursing homes,  
which represent  
**76%**  
of the publicly  
owned nursing  
homes



# COUNTIES INVEST \$70.2 BILLION

**TOTAL** in justice and public safety services annually, of which ...

## JUSTICE & PUBLIC SAFETY

Counties keep communities safe, by providing law enforcement and promoting crime prevention. From patrolling and policing the streets, to operating and maintaining county detention facilities, to serving as the arm of the county courts, county sheriffs and police departments are the linchpin of the criminal justice system. The other key players in the system are judges, district attorneys, public defenders, court clerks, jail directors and coroners.

### Criminal justice components include:

- Sheriffs departments
- County police departments
- County court systems
- Jails and correctional facilities
- Juvenile detention and justice services
- District attorneys
- Public defenders
- Coroners

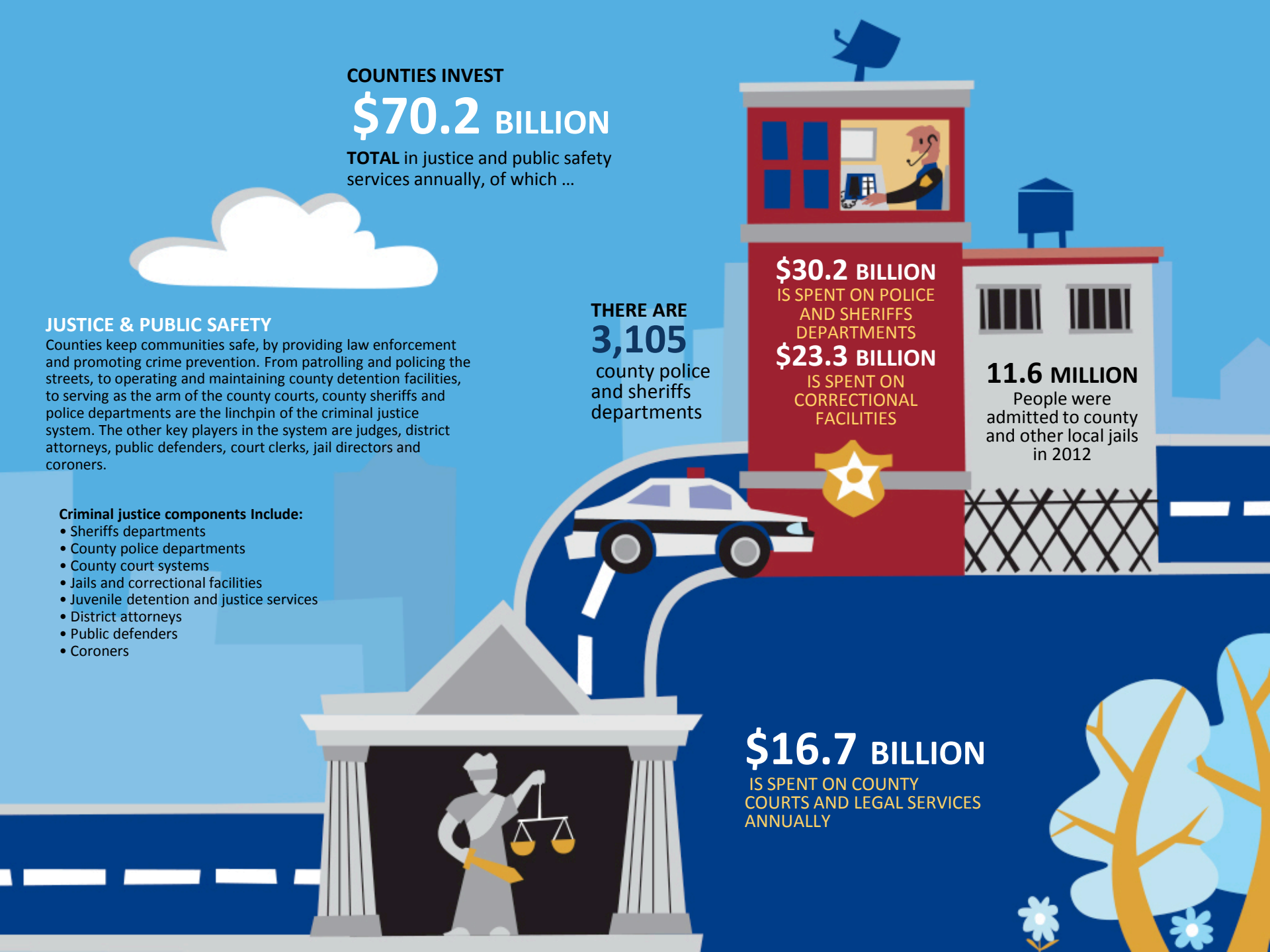
THERE ARE  
**3,105**  
county police  
and sheriffs  
departments

**\$30.2 BILLION**  
IS SPENT ON POLICE  
AND SHERIFFS  
DEPARTMENTS

**\$23.3 BILLION**  
IS SPENT ON  
CORRECTIONAL  
FACILITIES

**11.6 MILLION**  
People were  
admitted to county  
and other local jails  
in 2012

**\$16.7 BILLION**  
IS SPENT ON COUNTY  
COURTS AND LEGAL SERVICES  
ANNUALLY





## COUNTY MANAGEMENT

Counties provide vital services to all Americans, from issuing birth certificates and marriage licenses to operating 911 call centers. Counties often build and maintain the parks, swimming pools, community centers where you spend time with family and friends. Counties are responsible for running elections, from presidential to local. While balancing numerous administrative responsibilities, counties deliver essential services to ensure safe, healthy and resilient communities for their residents.

### Services Include:

- Record keeping
- Tax assessments
- 911 call centers
- Elections and polling places
- Recreation and parks
- Arts programs
- Housing, community and economic development

Every TWO  
Years ...

COUNTIES FUND AND  
OVERSEE MORE THAN

**114,000**  
polling places

THERE ARE MORE THAN  
**19,300**

Elected county board members  
and elected executives;

**711**

Are elected county executives

AND COORDINATE  
MORE THAN  
**692,000**  
Poll workers

ANNUALLY, COUNTIES INVEST

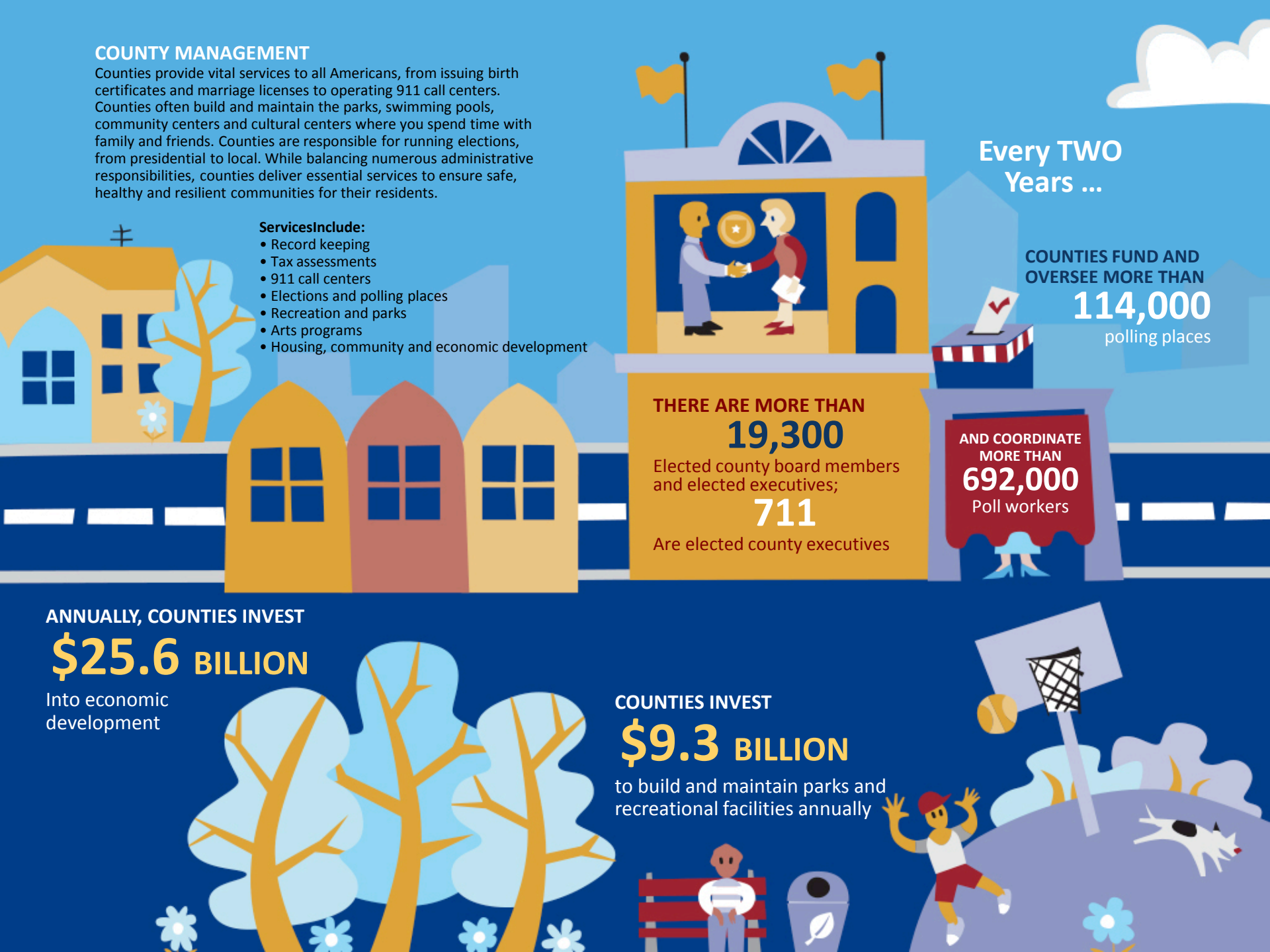
**\$25.6 BILLION**

Into economic  
development

COUNTIES INVEST

**\$9.3 BILLION**

to build and maintain parks and  
recreational facilities annually





# **NACo — BRINGING UNITY TO THE DIVERSITY OF AMERICA'S COUNTIES**

The nation's 3,069 county governments provide the essential services to create healthy, vibrant, and safe communities. Counties support and maintain public infrastructure, transportation and economic development assets; keep residents healthy; ensure public safety to protect our citizens; maintain public information and coordinate elections; and implement a broad array of federal, state and local programs in a cost-effective and efficient manner.

People depend on counties to provide services that build, maintain, and protect their homes, schools and neighborhoods. Counties are also an instrumental player in America's intergovernmental system of federal, state, and local governments.

NACo members support state and federal policies and programs that provide the tools, resources, and solutions needed to spur job growth, improve the quality of life for all Americans, and increase the economic competitiveness of America's counties and communities. To accomplish this, NACo adheres to a set of core principles through its core functions.

**[WWW.NACO.ORG/COUNTIESMATTER](http://WWW.NACO.ORG/COUNTIESMATTER)**

# NACo's CORE PRINCIPLES



Empower county leaders with new skills, resources and ideas



Promote sound public policies that advance the interests of counties



Assist counties with first-class, cost-effective services



Exercise sound stewardship and management of NACo's financial, intellectual, and human resources



Provide timely, informative and value-added data, knowledge and programs



Enhance the public's understanding of county government



# NACo's CORE FUNCTIONS



**Legislative, regulatory,  
and judicial  
representation in the  
nation's capital**



**Cost saving programs**



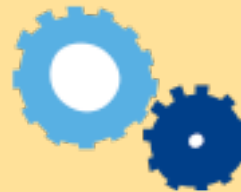
**Research**



**Solutions for critical  
problems**



**Education & technical  
assistance**



**Innovative programs  
that meet future county  
needs**